

P-05-895 Rosa's Legacy: Introduce a scheme to help people access veterinary care for their companion animals, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 10.11.21

To the Chair and Members of the Petitions Committee of Senedd Cymru.

Petition P-05-895 Rosa's Legacy: Introduce a scheme to help people access veterinary care for their companion animals.

Thank you for having my petition as an agenda item.

The Ministers response.

Thank you for inviting me to respond to Lesley Griffiths MS most recent correspondence on this subject.

I am pleased to see that Lesley realises this is a complex issue and also acknowledges the sterling work Members of our veterinary profession undertake here in Cymru.

But I don't really feel that the Minister fully understand the issues I have raised in relation to the corporate takeover of every tier of veterinary practices here. Together with the impact this has had on companion animal welfare, us their families or indeed the profession themselves. I have laid before the Committee several documents from organisations who also share my concerns including the BVU (British Veterinary Union- part of Unite) .

I am pleased to see the Minister mention the rescue centres . This issue affects them too - both on accessing veterinary care for their own residents and people signing over or sadly abandoning their animals due to not being able to afford or access veterinary care. Either way putting greater strain on them .

I have always made clear that I don't think the solution to this problem lies with the third sector. Especially not here in Wales where as the Ministers letter makes clear the welfare of companion animals is a priority. So I was very disappointed to read the course of action Lesley had decided on.

The Minister has in the past said the Welsh Government was looking at a scheme to help families of companion animals access veterinary care. Lesley herself acknowledged that people's circumstances can change- Covid-19 has significantly added to this I feel.

Once again I am also disappointed that the Minister fails to acknowledge or take account of the work that the Companion Animal Welfare Group Wales (CAWGW) has already done on this subject (as your Committee's request) . Or taken up the offer of their former Chair Christine Chapman to look at this issue collaborative, thus utilising their vast knowledge and expertise.

Members may be aware that Bethan Sayed a former Senedd Cymru Member and Member of the Senedd Cymru Petitions Committee has recently taken on the position of chairing this group .

Update on corporate takeover.

As Members may be aware this summer the Completion and Markets Association (CMA) of the UK Government announced it had put a stop to the CVS veterinary group buying more veterinary practices and they also launched a consultation on this **1.**

Yet recently another equity shareholder company announced another substantial buyout- this time Vets Partners. Neither CMA or the UK Government have yet commented on this happening **2.**

I really doubt the CMA are seeing the greater picture and I certainly think they have been very slow to act and use their regulatory powers.

Next steps.

May I suggest Members:

1: Contact the Minister Lesley Griffiths MS asking her for an update on the Welsh Government's intention to introduce help for the families of companion animals to access veterinary care should their circumstances change.

2: Contact the Competition Marketing Authority (CMA) to request an update on their investigations into the corporate veterinary takeover. Also asking the CMA if they intend to look at Vet Partners recent buyout.

3: Contact Bethan Sayed in her position as Chair of CAWGW asking if they still have concerns around this issue.

I wish to thank Members for their diligence in this matter and for taking notice of one truly broken hearted Welsh woman. Whose overriding motive is that no one else suffers the horrors she and her beloved family Member did. Coupled with the desire to help our overworked and undervalued veterinary profession in small animal practice who are at crisis point.

If I can assist Members further I will endeavour to do so .